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Thoughts of the Year

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COMPLIMENTS
OF THE
SEASON

THE AUTHOR
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Thoughts of the Year

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What Is Man?

You men who invented the airplane,
You men who plow lanes through the sea,
You who spark fires thru the winds without wires,
And dream of the marvels to be;
Your aims are as naught in the end,
Impotent as dew on the sod,
For all you have done is as stars to the sun,
To the wonderful powers of God.

You men who hew life out of stone,
You who record music and song,
You men in high places who rule o'er the races,
To hist'ry your names may belong;
But paint me a tanager's breast,
Or grow me a pea in a pod;
Your works are the thicket where chirrups the cricket,
Compared to the marvels of God.

You men who build towers to the sky,
You men who run trains below ground,
You who under stress have won proud success—
Whose genius has made you renowned;
Now make me the flower in the field,
Create me the wild golden rod,
Your feats are the twilight eclipsed by the high light,
To the infinite wisdom of God.

To A Good Friend

When on my travels far away,
I hum my lay at close of day,
And wonder what your thots can be,
Undoubtedly, oft-times of me.

When shadows fall on things unseen,
A cast of sheen o'er the fields of green,
'Tis then I thrust thru worlds of care,
That I may share your ardent prayer.

Dear, constant, tenderest friend, and true,
A thought from you comes whispering thru,
On winds of evening in their swell,
Which sweetly tell that all is well.

If faith can move the living hills,
And halt the rills as so it wills,
Our friendship then should never fail,
Nor aught bewail the onward trail.

Life's Seasons

I am standing now at morning,
There breathes the dawn of day,
I take my turn to laugh and cry,
And grow and learn and play.

I tread a path of crimson flame,
I sing a song of fire,
I dance a whirling witch's dance,
Of youth and mad desire.

In moods I pluck the hollyhocks,
The song birds twit above,
I hold a warm responsive hand,
And feel the thrill of love.

And now I stand at noontime
Beside the surging sea,
Each day I win or pay the score,
The tides have tossed to me.

I weary of the turmoil,
The bitterness and strife,
The never-ceasing struggle
Of the ups and downs of life.

I cannot halt but onward run
To follow fortune's pace—
He pays the toll of blood who wins,
The swift relentless race.

At last I stand at evening,
The sky in radiant glow,
Behind I leave the conflict,
The trials and the woe.

And out across the sunset vale—
The golden-misted crest,
The triumphs pass before me in
My calm and peaceful rest.

I hear the distant citherns chant
The harmonies that lure
The souls of men to other fields—
The dreamer and the doer.

Where Flows the Licking

In the hills of old Kentucky,
Where the Licking River flows,
There my step is prone to lead me,
And my thought forever goes.

Where sunbeams gleam a-streaming,
And the raindrops ripple rhymes.
Oh, my song is ever tuneful,
Of the scenes of olden times.

Where the podophyllin's smiling,
And the roses bloom at dawn,
Oft I dwell in blue grass valleys,
Where the paths of youth have gone.

Where the woods are tinted deeply,
With their gorgeous crown of gold,
And the folks are ever faithful,
And their love ne'er growth cold.

When the weary days o'ertake me,
Kindly voices call me back,
And I urge the train to speed me,
Down the winding, moonlit track.

Yes, I dote on old Kentucky,
Where the Licking waters flow,
There I find the truest friendship
That my heart will ever know.

A Barnyard Fantasy

See that red hen over there,
Proud and prim and haughty air,
Bet I'll make a hit with her,
When I make my feathers whirr,
Watch me stretch and bristle too—
And give my cock-a-doodle-do!

There's my little speckled hen,
Only visits now and then,
She's a smart and dapper thing,
Others grudge her sprightly wing,
They all take heed when I pursue—
And shriek my cock-a-doodle-do!

See that white hen trim and neat,
Feathers fair from head to feet,
Scratching by the barnyard gate,
Where the worms predominate;
She's the kind I like to woo—
And cry my cock-a-doodle-do!

There's my hen of raven black,
Who lays in yonder clover stack,
Plume of jet she gaily wears,
And lightly clacks away her cares.
So now with her I'll bill and coo—
And crow my cock-a-doodle-do!

And now my blue hen hoves in sight,
Indeed a summer dream's delight,
She is the show of all the flock,
A prize she'd take on any block;
I'll strain my graceful neck askew—
And sing my cock-a-doodle-do!

* * *

The farmer came in righteous rage,
Quoth he, "What is this, sloth or age?
"All you do is strut and crow,
"And search for feed with beak and toe,
"My flock is sadly running down,
"I have no chicks to sell in town"—
And as the ax fell keen and true,
He chocked his last cock-doodle-do.

A. M. E. Zion Sociable

"How you do, Mis' Johnsing,
I'se glad to see you heah to-day,
You's sprucin' up a little
Since yo' ole man done pass awa-a-y."

"And there you is, Mis' Sims,
Yo' suah am lookin' mighty fine,
You jest must lead de singin'
Befo' we-all let you be gwine."

"If there ain't Mis' Link'um,
Dey say she's some high flyah,
But jedgin' from her looks,
I think they's all a liah."

"La-a-nd sakes, Mis' Jones, ha, ha!
I made de very bes' I could,
Dat recipe you gave me,
It suah do me a powah o' good."

"Oh, deah, heah come Mis' Butts,
Did you evah—what's she got on?
Dat niggah thinks she's steppin'
Wearin' dem glasses rimmed wit' hawn."

"Y-all will come to ordah,
While de cake and cream be served,
And quit yo' wicked smilin'
Or de pastah 'll be unnerved."

To A Beautiful Girl

Your teeth are a range of Bahrain pearls,
Your skin the facile lily leaves,
Your lips are the silken lotus furls,
Your presence the perfumed zephyr's breeze.

Your cry is the coo of the turtle dove,
Your smile is fancy's flight,
Your heart is the flame of burning love,
Your eyes are its mirrored light.

Your laugh is the brook that ripples low,
Your hair a resplendent creation,
Your thots are the pure and drifting snow,
Your spirt an inspiration.

Later: To the Same Dame

Your smile is the mask of cunning deceits,
Your eyes are false diamonds of paste,
Your touch the cobra that strikes and retreats,
Your vows the barren desert's waste.

Your kiss is the fungi that tints and blends,
With ancient Nepal's poison flowers,
Your voice is the wolf that comprehends
His prey in the dark and tragic hours.

Your form is the deadly spider's silk,
That lays in wait for the naked heel,
Nor e'en could the warmth of human milk,
Take hold of your heart and make it feel.

Wiwatha Sees New York

From the shores of Lake Begosh
From the village of Oskosh
Came the Indian maid Wiwatha
To the bright lights and fire-water
To the city of high towers
To the hamlet of New York
Came she there to see the pale face
See the wonders of the white race
Came to learn and not to lark.

But her fair and pallid sisters
Took her, (with some idle jesters—
Unsophisticated maiden
From the Indian reservation)—
To a prize fight at the Garden
At the Garden on the Square.
Here the fistic virtuosos
Hallorhan and Bat Levinsky
Were to fight for money pin-sky
(Fifty thousand on the side).
In the corners were their trainers
Lefty Finn and Biffem Doolan
(Former battlers, now they school 'em)
And their seconds were Pat Hogan
Tim McGoork and Mickey Grogan.

Then the gong rang for the going
For the going and the milling;
Each man squared off for the melee
Both men squared off for the melee
And the fight was fast and furious
The crowd was morbid curious
Levinsky uppered with his right
But Hallorhan hit left handed
Struck left handed but he missed
Missed because he'd been knocked cock-eyed
And his left ear was hanging lop-side
And the blood oozed from his mouth.

Wiwatha Sees New York
(Concluded)

Then he countered to the nooodle
Kicked Levinsky's big flapdoodle
Poked his elbow in his plexus
Churned his dinner into breakfast
All the time Levinsky battled
On Hallorhan's nose staccato
Beat his liver (ma non troppo)
And his gizzard (a la grotto)
Thus they battered each one mellow
While the mob let out a bellow.

Wiwatha watched the gory pounders
Heard the hoots and jibes of rounders
Till the Indian nature in her
Was no more to be contained—
Contained no longer in her.
And she jumped up from her seat-um
Yelling "Wahoo Hallorhan, beat 'im
Tommyhawk him, scalp 'im, jazz 'im!
Heap big knuckle hit him, razz 'im!"
But the fight was quickly over
When Hallorhan landed squarely
Squarely on Levinsky's bean
And Levinsky fell a-groaning
Like a kookoo with the asthma
Or a tree toad with lumbago
Or a craw-fish with the tetter
Or the braying of an ass.

And they asked Wiwatha gently
As she left for home presently
How she liked her visit to New York
So she answered as she giggled
And her gitchi goolo wiggled
(As well might be surmised)
"Take me back to yonder steepee
To the wigwam and the teepee
Where the folks are civilized."

Religion

The music of an organ reached my ears
As wandered I along a city street;
A spired church around the way appears
And en'tring there I occupied a seat.

The service went by abitrary law,
At once we all were called upon to pray.
I wondered how the ritual could draw
The congregation meekly to obey.

Remorseless custom must have gripped their wills;
No sign of foretaste, utter lack of awe—
The barren faith this empty form fulfills
Reflected on the faces that I saw.

And as I sat observing quite alone,
I pondered on the spell religion holds,
That by an empty form we might atone
For all the wrongs the weening mind unfolds.

Is this the path that leads to Heaven's door—
An hour's penance promise of hereafter?
Or might we be more certain on that score
By daily turning tear-drops into laughter?

Trouble

"Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and chauldron bubble."

This wierdly chant from old Macbeth
Has haunted man from birth till death,
This thing which never comes alone,
Which turns our pillow into stone.
Along life's way, in darkling pool,
Where slips the sage, where falls the fool,
It wallows in the murky slime,
It knows no law, respects no time.
Treacherous it, with fang and claw
To twine us in its greedy maw,
And not a hundred thousand years
Have eased its sting or stilled its fears.

It strikes when life is gay or dull
To satisfy its brutish skull;
Like swirling eddies, pulls us down
And millions in its tear moat drown.
Its torments bring their direful blights
And with them many sleepless nights;
No mercy has it ever shown.
When, strong or weak, its victims groan.
It turns no ear to heed our cries,
It ever lives, it never dies.

E'en after we have gained the hill
Beyond the grinding dolor mill,
There still are those we left behind,
Bereft of peace and racked of mind,
Nor will his terrors ever end
Until the skies above unbend,
For always some with gasping breath
Shall take the cry from old Macbeth:

"Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and chauldron bubble."

To Vi—The Perfect Dancer

My hours with her are golden and they
leave a mellow gleam,
A swan-like vision floating in the ripple of
the stream,
Divinely slow—our hearts aglow—
The measures of the music grow,
With wistful eyes I see her rise,
A winging queen of butterflies.

The rythmic motions of her lines are waves
of bonny grace—
A red-winged houri come to life to flit from
place to place.
My pulses beat like wind on wheat
As glide and turn are joined complete,
A breath of light, a joy of sight,
Her dance to crown the perfect night.

I did not know that nimble feet could thrill
me like a maiden's kiss
That bursts upon my fevered face and drugs
me with its bliss!
In laughing glee she smiles to me,
A smile that all the world should see!
A fairy dower, a bud in flower,
And youth has danced its fleeting hour.

When life's parade of gaudy years are faded
from my prime,
And I no longer dance with her the airy
steps of time,
A-lack-a-day! I'm on my way,
To dreamy isles of Mandalay,
To ponder when—the gods or men—
Will fan the flame that lit me then.

To Dixie

We all love you, Dixie,
Warm as you are,
Bathed in the sunbeams—
Dangling your star.

We dream of your glory,
Lured by the light,
Holding us close
To your breast all night.

The call of your voice
Your children have heard,
Your echoing cry,
Your wandering word.

Yes, you are romance,
And you are song,
To rest on your bosom
We yearn and long.

No rose in its arbor
Breathes sweeter air,
No queen in her palace
Has outlook more fair.

Where Paradise comes,
The earth to embrace,
Our Dixie, indeed,
Your're a wonderful place!

The Songs of Francett

O placid maid, with eyes that glisten,
Lips that sing—and we stop to listen —
Whence comes thy song?—a thought exprest,
Between whose lines lie dreams comprest.

In solemn hours, and quiet too,
Your song brings memories fond of you;
Each lovely note as from the soul,
Pours forth its volume of the whole.

Among the interwoven strands
Of love and home and other lands,
Your voice with music richly stored,
Awakes the latent, vibrant chord.

With fervent verse and melodies,
Our pulses rise in ecstasies—
Bejeweled throat whose golden lyres,
The rapture of our heart inspires.

Fantastic quatrains we'd indite,
Expressive of our deep delight
With such a warbling tongue as thine—
The thrush itself would call divine.

Sweet singer of the treasured hours,
Thy gifted brow enwreathed in flowers,
What sixth sense power to some is given,
That they may sound the tones of Heaven!

The French Quarter

Ancient French Quarter,
Recount her story,
Mark her traditions,
Behold her glory!

Look in the lens of the mystic past,
The Father of Waters fringed with masts,
Towers and steeples and windowed walls,
Streets where precepts of yesterday calls.

Thoroughfares lined with traffic and trade,
Once the proud passage of grandame's parade,
Flourish of revelry, riot and pleasure,
Pirates fast squandering ill-gotten treasure.

Rickety tenements, nondescript shops,
Clutter of balconies hung from the tops,
Stately cathedrals, mansions and stoops,
Pick-pockets, gamblers, knaves and their dupes.

Frenchmen, Spaniards and soldiers of fortune,
Round the old slave block the negroes are tor-
turin',
'Cajins that live on the bayous nearby,
Voluptuous Creoles with dark, piercing eye.

Motley French Market, fish cribs and stalls,
Babel of foreigners, curses and brawls,
Polyglot newspapers seen now and then,
Read by the people in palace and den.

Mardi Gras crowds in costume and mask,
Wine of Burgundy in casket and flask—
Some come to mingle and some come to die,
So goes the concourse as time passes by.

Archaic French Quarter,
Ponder her story,
Revere her rich history,
Marvel her glory!

The 'Cajin Mother

Thru her eyes where tears have leapt,
On her lonely hovel step,
Sits the 'Cajin mother weeping,
Watching where her child is sleeping.
Where the waving willow's bleat
Makes a sound so thin and sweet,
Where the lilies and rosemary
Give her peaceful sanctuary,
And the bird of silver wing
Nests in sad remembering.

How could life but sear and harden,
As she trudged in house and garden,
And her grief was heavy, very,
As she faintly moans ma cherie,
Little lips that now are dumb
When the evening shadows come;
Once she held her on her knee,
Precious girlie, wild and free;
Softly nursed her to her breast,
Watched her eyelids close in rest,
Till the anguish o'er her stole,
When its death had wrung her soul.

From the grave in slyvan view,
Fresh with an eternal dew,
Like to God's unchanging law,
Comes the child's como sava—
"Sorrow not, my dear, my dear,
It is not so dreadful here."

My States of the Union

In Kansas, from whose plains I spring,
The sunflowers bend on morning's wing,
And every man is born a king —
Her praise I always sing.

Youth's dreams drop from her linden tree,
The locusts whir a melody,
Her skies awake my minstrelsy—
She ever beckons me.

In great Ohio's proud domain,
Where famous statesmen wax and wane,
And folks are bred of classic strain —
I long for her again.

Whatever nature should possess,
To give the world for usefulness,
Her men for good of man will press—
The people there to bless.

In Louisiana's floral weal,
Her wistful and her strange appeal,
The old world and the new congeal—
And make the senses reel.

Her quaint romance of Creole lore,
The mystic of her days of yore,
Three nations' flags have flown before—
Her charm I still adore.

In Illinois, majestic state,
Where shining fields perambulate,
"I WILL" is blazoned on her gate —
To her I trust my fate.

Life comes aspiring everywhere,
Against Chicago's surging air,
I listen when her winds blow fair—
I know what voice is there.

1922-23.

Good Friend:

AT this season as one year is closed behind us with all its events and another opens upon us with its rising star of hope, it is the custom among our people to send to one another a token of remembrance.

To you I send the "Thoughts of the Year" gathered together in the fleeting moments of the passing days.

I am not a poet. While appreciating the celebrated bards who have left their sonnets to bless the ages, I have always regarded the average amateur poet as a "nut." When I started putting verse together I did it to get my mind off of business problems, so I considered I had nothing to lose; *i. e.*, I would as leave be a crazy poet as a crazy business man. Hence the effort and the apology for its imperfections.

While on long journeys I find it restful to compose verse; when weary it is a balm; when sleepless, a surcease; when lonely, a friend. It brings quiescence to the mind, peace to the heart, and tranquility to the soul.

We should all write verse; the business man in his recreation, the woman in the spare hours of the home, the child in the

development of its mind. When we write it we learn to love it for its thrill. Poetry is the rhythm of life, the true message of the heart, the silent song of God implanted in the mind of man that he may tune his being in perfect harmony with the music of the sphere.

I have thot of you during the past year; that's why I send you this. I could send you something else, but nothing as priceless as a Good Thot. A Good Thot is a spiritual flower and too often we do not send the flowers until our friends are gone. Why are we prone to withhold our appreciation? "Seven cities fought for Homer, dead, thru whose streets the living Homer begged for bread."

What is more animating from time to time than to open the door where envy cannot enter and behold the progress of our friends, and bid them well?

May the Christmas season and the New Year bring you contentment and happiness and as much prosperity as the vicissitudes of the times may graciously permit. This is my earnest wish for *you.*

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